1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
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vestiture was over, the *ebamei* crowded on to the *obu* platform at the end of the village on which were already strewn heaps of high-smelling pig flesh. It was by now growing dusk, but there was still enough daylight for them to make a brilliant patch of colour against the dark background of forest trees. The reason for this move on the part of the *ebamei* was said variously to be (1) that all the people should see them, (2) that they should see all the people, and (3) that they should see all the pig meat.

During the whole of this time the *ebamei* have had to support the weight of their *kokumbari* feathers and ornaments, to which has now in most cases been added that of their *otobu*; and they have neither drunk water, nor, except for banana and sugar-cane, broken their fast since morning. These ordeals, however, must continue throughout the night, which is occupied with singing and dancing and with the *ai sumbasiona*, or abusing of the women. This latter consists of highly obscene choruses and action songs, to which the women respond in kind and with no lack of spirit. It may be that under the circumstances morality is loosened. I quote a sentence of Chinnery and Beaver's: 'In ordinary circumstances an initiation is a time of somewhat general licence, promiscuous intercourse being permitted between any initiated man and woman.'[1] Witnesses have assured me that such promiscuity is confined to the initiation ceremonies. The initiates bear no part in it, but between their elders it is unrestricted. No husband might object if another man made free with his wife, for, it was said, he would fear retaliation by sorcery if he interfered. Needless to say I have no more than verbal evidence for this licence, but there is little doubt that at these times it does occur.

Next morning the *ebamei* are subjected to a rite called *ate-ate*, which appears to mean literally 'demonstration'. Once more they sit in a row on the logs, each with a man behind him armed with a stout stick. In front of the initiates stand their respective mothers holding a taro in the left hand, and the sharp peeler of oyster or coco-nut shell

[1] *Loc. cit.*, p. 77.

2: Williams E.G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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called *Baigona* and were to be treated with affection and respect. They must be hailed and welcomed whenever they were seen; to kill or eat them was forbidden. These taboos extended to a number of other creatures—lizards, crocodiles, cuscus, and the like—all of which, in native belief, are commonly the reincarnations of departed spirits.

The originator of this cult imparted his knowledge of certain medicines, rites, and taboos to others, and this kind of individual initiation was passed on until there grew up a clique of '*Baigona* men', who might be called priests of the new cult, and who were to be found in villages as far north as the German boundary.

Meanwhile the horde of ignorant and gullible believers rapidly increased, comprehending little more of the new order than the general taboo regarding reptiles. The genuine *Baigona* men professed to practise healing, but there was another side to their activities: there is little doubt that they were sorcerers to a man, who held the masses in considerable fear and practised an easy kind of extortion. Together with other methods of professed healing they underwent themselves, and induced in their patients, paroxysms of a peculiarly horrible nature. These paroxysms became the general vogue among all who were affected by the cult, and this, together with the practice of sorcery and extortion, led the Government to discourage and suppress the movement. The craft of the *Baigona* men was virtually stamped out ten years ago, though in the interior of the Northern Division there are still to be found regular *Baigona* practitioners who, with a strange amount of confidence in themselves, continue to try their cures upon strangely confident patients. This practice, however, is thought by the natives to be against the law of the Government, and is therefore only in secret. Despite certain effects which it has left on native custom, the *Baigona* cult may be said to have died out. On the whole one is tempted to class it as thoroughly obnoxious.

It was very soon replaced by another movement,

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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The rites—they hardly deserve such a name—are of an exceedingly sociable character, consisting typically of a singing in concert, to the accompaniment of drums, and of feasting with certain new forms of etiquette, the whole festive ceremony being known as *Kasamba*. The songs—like so many native songs, unintelligible alike to the listener and the singers—would often appear to be, in their origin, exhortations or hymns of praise to the taro. Certain sects perform distinctive dances, but, except in a few instances, the dance has not been highly elaborated, and remains a minor feature of the cult. Perhaps as an unintentional substitute, the innumerable followers of the movement indulged in various kinds of foolish antics, with reeling, staggering, and a violent shaking of the head and limbs known as *jipari*. There was no attempt to control these actions—rather the contrary—and they commonly ended in mild contortions and paroxysms. Such uncontrolled bodily movements do not belong to the Taro cult alone, but have been a common and unpleasant feature of many of the new religious movements enumerated above.

While practically every one has been a willing convert to the Taro cult in so far as it meant participation in the song and feast, and while perhaps the majority have given way at some time or other to the pleasant abandonment of the *jipari*, there is a wide class of Taro *experts* or special exponents of the cult. It is impossible to set a definite limit to this class. There are some who are recognized as leaders and who are very strongly 'possessed', and others who are little more than laymen. However, it is possible to include them all under the name of *ba-embo*, which means literally 'Taro man'. Such men, who, like the *Baigona* men, might be called priests of the cult, officiate and lead in the ceremonial feasting; they perform certain duties in the taro gardens; they make a special practice of *jipari* and similar contortions; and they subject themselves to certain taboos. The theory of their conduct is that of possession by a spirit, either of the taro itself or of the dead.

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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Time and again was Buninia visited by the same spirits in his dreams. Sometimes they left him the large knitted bags, called *ase*, which are used for carrying taro; sometimes the special kinds of pots and dishes in which the taro was to be cooked; sometimes the wooden prong or fork with which it was to be eaten. All these things he showed to his people and instructed them in their proper use. So also he taught them the dance and the various other elements, trivial enough, of the new religion.

But all this did not happen at once. Buninia volunteered the very significant information that from his youth up he had been subject to shaking-fits, some mild kind of seizures, which were not seriously regarded by his friends. According to his own view—about which he was entirely confident—these seizures had been caused from the beginning by the taro spirits in possession of his body, but he had not realized this until it all became clear through his dream.

What might be called the inauguration of the cult occurred at Taututu. Buninia was sitting quietly with his lime-pot in his lap and enjoying a little stimulant, when suddenly he found himself again attacked by one of his paroxysms. This time he began to shout, '*Ba, ba, ba!*' i.e. 'Taro, taro!' His brother, one Oriva, ran to his assistance, no doubt much alarmed, but Buninia dispatched him to call together all the neighbouring villages. People flocked to the scene from Deboi, Duvira, Tsia, and Bebewa. The new prophet continued to shake violently. As the people watched him they one and all fell into the same condition. Buninia harangued them and expounded the doctrines of the taro spirits. He fixed his attention in particular on his friend Yaviripa, and cried shame upon him for not making a feast. Meanwhile the *jipari*, or shaking-fit, continued to affect the bystanders; but at Buninia's word they returned, temporarily at least, to their senses, and were dismissed to their villages. They all 'had the Taro', and the new cult was launched.

Similar outbreaks occurred again and again. When

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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Buninia was in a state of possession the people would swarm around, and, more than touching the hem of his garment, would lean on him, and embrace him in their eagerness to acquire the influence. When he showed the women the taro medicines—mere leaves or weeds—they would seize them, rub them over his limbs, and thrust them into the string bags which they used for carrying the taro; and men would apply their axes and digging sticks to his body in order that they might absorb his powers.

The Resident Magistrate came and said that the *Baigona* men were at their games once more. They told him he was mistaken, this was something new. So he left them to it. Next came the Bishop, who told them there was not much harm in the Taro, but that they should give up the shaking-fits. When the Magistrate came a second time they informed him that they had given up the shaking-fits, and now confined their activities to singing and dancing. Such was the account given me by Buninia and his friends of the early days of the new movement. It is probably far from accurate. The *jipari*, for instance, was not abandoned, but merely hushed up, because it was recognized that to a white man it was only subject for ridicule or disapproval.

While Buninia probably deserves the honour of originating the cult, there is one other rival claimant, so to speak, who cannot be dismissed. This is the woman Kosivo, now deceased, who was *hovatu*, or sister-in-law, to Buninia, and also lived in Taututu. According to this version (obtained from a different set of informants), Kosivo had been visited by the spirits of three men, who, fleeing at the first approach of the white men on the Mambare, had jumped from the frying-pan into the fire by encountering a hostile tribe at Lake Koena, who killed and ate them. The spirits of these three returning to their home found the woman Kosivo, had sexual intercourse with her, presented her (in a manner not made very plain) with the spirit of the taro, and left her in a

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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trance as one dead. According to the teller of this story, Kosivo was the first recipient of the taro spirit. When she died and was buried all the mourners were attacked by the *jipari* or shaking-fit, on the following morning; they had received the taro spirit, and this was said to be the real inauguration of the cult. Buninia and Yaviripa hotly denied this story, and, after the manner of natives who are contradicted by other natives, said it was a lie. Buninia claimed that the first real visitation was to himself, and had occurred after the death of Kosivo.

As for the origin of the actual *jipari*, which forms such an important part of the cult, it is, as we shall see, no new phenomenon among primitive folk. In this instance, however, it may be regarded as proximately an inheritance from *Baigona*. The fashion—for there were fashions in paroxysms, although they were supposedly involuntary and uncontrolled—was somewhat different, but, as we shall find, different fashions were developed even by the different sects of the Taro cult. This subject will receive a fuller discussion in a later part of the report.

4. *Dissemination of the Cult*

Having described the immediate origin of the cult—a matter which even so soon has become garbled and conjectural—I may pass on to the manner of its dissemination, which is equally interesting and more certain. A professing Taro man is sometimes found to maintain that his inspiration and knowledge have come to him direct. He will not name the man from whom he has learnt the tricks of his trade and received his simple initiation. Such a claim, indeed, is in keeping with the usual theory of possession—in so far as that theory is explicit and accepted; for the spirit, whether of the taro or of the dead, invades a man's body of its own accord. It is also a natural result of the jealousy and ambition of the medicine-man (for that name is applicable enough to the exponents of Taro); he may give out that his inspiration and revealed knowledge have been direct and unaided,

2: Williams E, G-5 (1923-1925) 1928
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such visits—which are often associated with feasts or burials, and accordingly with a good deal of excitement—that the new ideas and practices are so readily acquired.

It is noteworthy that they are passed on very frequently between relatives. We find an instance of a man visiting his wife's brother in sickness and becoming, perhaps against his expectations, a convert to the Taro; of another visiting his mother's people, and returning with the inspiration, which in due course is acquired by his brother-in-law. Examples of this nature are innumerable. It is a case of 'letting your friend in on a good thing'.

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(*b*) *Proselytism*. The other method of dissemination is by the active propaganda of the Taro men. This method, although it may attract more notice, has not exerted the same steady pressure as the one above described. The minor cult of Manau (which will be dealt with at a further stage) provides an example. The leaders of it were Dasiga and Bia; a prominent disciple was Yavevi, adopted son of Bia. To extend the influence of the cult, Dasiga, with a large following, descended the coast from Manau by the Mambare mouth to the neighbourhood of Buna (a distance of some sixty miles), and there conducted 'services' in Yavevi's village, creating, one is given to understand, a startling but not very enduring impression.

So again, an interpreter in my employ named Ihipa, who was strongly imbued with the *Diroga* (a variant of the Taro cult which prevails in the southern part of the Division), set himself out in a tactful and unobtrusive way to plant the good seed in the Aiga district, where hitherto the *Diroga* was practically unknown. Almost nightly the boy-house was the scene of a *kasamba*, with its drum-beating and singing, loud, everlasting, and happily not unmusical. Ihipa would occasionally be [786] seized with twitching and shuddering, and various of the younger singers would find themselves unaccountably following his example. Then Ihipa would explain to them that they had the *Diroga*: they were his converts.

3: Reay E-4, 5 (1951) 1953 OJ23 Orokaiva OJ23

headdresses. At the conclusion of the initiation, some of the initiates are presented with the *otohu* ornaments. (Formerly, it was always a distinguished warrior who presented these.) The initiates then fast for a day and a night. That night, there is sexual licence for the senior villagers, a temporary lifting of tabus on incest and adultery, but the initiates themselves are not permitted to participate.

In interpreting the initiation ceremonies of the Orokaiva, Chinnery and Beaver state that "the idea . . . seems to be to instil absolute and lasting terror into the candidates, and to make them think that their elders have beaten off the spirits; while in this receptive and chastened frame of mind, the lads, imbued with the idea of the power of the men, will pay attention to the instruction given. There appears to be an idea that the spirits of the dead are present, and that the initiated, *i.e.* the living, are keeping them away from the candidates."[6]

Amongst the living, the initiation ritual juxtaposes the two groups, initiated and uninitiated, the one group terrified and utterly helpless, and the other well able to deal with the *embahi* spirits and drive away danger. Thus the respect for seniority, which is informally learned during childhood, is finally established.

An Erikson-type psychoanalytic interpretation would doubtless find in the *embahi's* threat to devour the boys, with the menacing reiteration "Bite, bite, bite!" a dramatization of the *meni orosati's* guilt at biting the mother. I have not enough data to confirm or deny the admissibility of such an interpretation.

Above all, initiation involves the explicit instruction of the boys in the *otohu* virtues. This instruction takes place during their period of seclusion in the *oro*. Later, when *otohu* ornaments are given to some of them, they are again exhorted in detail to practise these virtues. The possession of an *otohu* imposes a social obligation on the wearer to "live up to it," and the prestige associated with this ornament indubitably ensures that a large number of people do in fact approximate to the ideal *otohu* patterns of behaviour.

(3) Sanctions

In Orokaiva society, sanctions operate diffusely and need no specific person's direction to put them into effect. The *embo kiti*, whom F. E. Williams called a "clan headman," but who is really more of a village headman whose position is hereditary within a certain lineage of the clan, has a limited authority which is backed by no sanctions. He has no power to reward or punish, except by making obvious his approval or disapproval of various lines of action. In fact, there is no rewarding and punishing authority at all.

Retaliation seems to have been the commonest sanction in former times, in the form of direct violence or the more subtle method of sorcery.[7] Retaliation by sorcery may still be practised; I have no information on this point. Certainly deaths are still attributed to sorcery. When (during 1950) several people from the same village

[6] E. W. P. Chinnery and W. N. Beaver, in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. XLV, 1915.

[7] F. E. Williams, *Orokaiva Society*, pp. 327–329.

4: Chinnery & Haddon E-5 (ca. 1915)1917
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coast as far as the old Anglo-German boundary and for a long way up the rivers of the Kumusi Division. Moreover, the cult is still spreading. Needless to say, the Baigonas have to pay for their instruction. One or two men in a village go through a period of tuition, and, on their return, initiate the rest of the villagers, not into the positions which they themselves hold, but into a belief in their new powers. This is effected by a ceremony in which the people are smeared over with some stuff from the bush, and the Baigona gives each one a smack and sends him to wash in the sea. The ceremony gets its name from the "washing." Dr Copland King has seen Baigonas use massage on a patient. They massage the arms, for instance, down to the fingers, and then, as they say, pull Baigona out from the finger tips. The young men of the village, standing round the patient, sing a song, which seems to be the usual string of meaningless words. Only two recognised drugs are used, —viz. *Euphorbia pilulifera*, the "asthma herb of Queensland," which is burnt with the coral when preparing lime for chewing with betel-nut, and *E. Drummondii*, also used medicinally by Australian settlers, and eaten with paw-paw when chewing the nut. Various other plants are employed as drugs, but only such as are beneficial. All this was obviously a very subtle move on the part of Maine. How can the Government interfere in such circumstances? At the same time, the Baigona have powers of life and death, because if they do not choose to give the patient these drugs, or, in other words, if the patient does not pay enough for them, he dies; for the Papuan, like most savages, is peculiarly susceptible to impression, and can fall sick, or even die, without any corresponding physical cause. The Baigona does not work in his garden. He will not drink plain water, but only coconut milk. He pays more attention to dressing his hair and decorating his face with red paint than other people; he has not much else to occupy his time, as either from fear or in payment his village companions do his garden work for him. Very often during the evening in the village the Baigona goes into a fit, passing into a trance. It begins with violent shivering, after which the man falls to the ground and becomes insensible, uttering spasmodic bursts of rapid talk. His people cover him with a mat, and sit around listening and applauding. Dr Copland King has not been able to make sense of what he says on such occasions, and does not know whether the people understand it either. The main feature of the cult is the prohibition to kill snakes, crocodiles, monitor lizards, and